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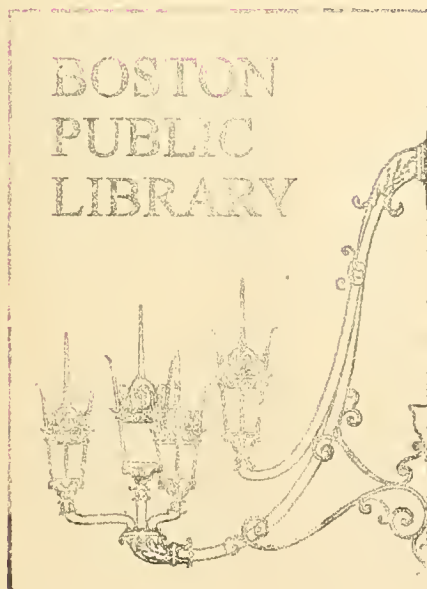
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NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

FENWAY-KENMORE

OCTOBER 2, 1974

Boston Redevelopment Authority

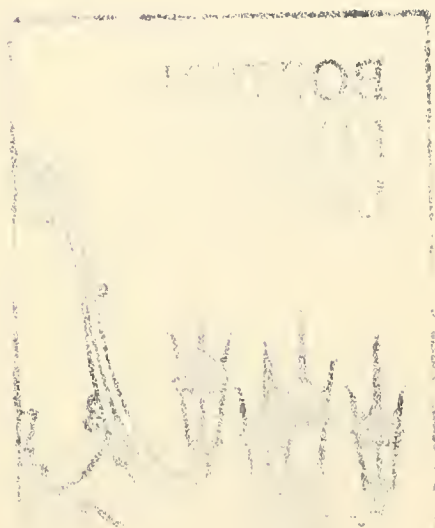
Planning Department

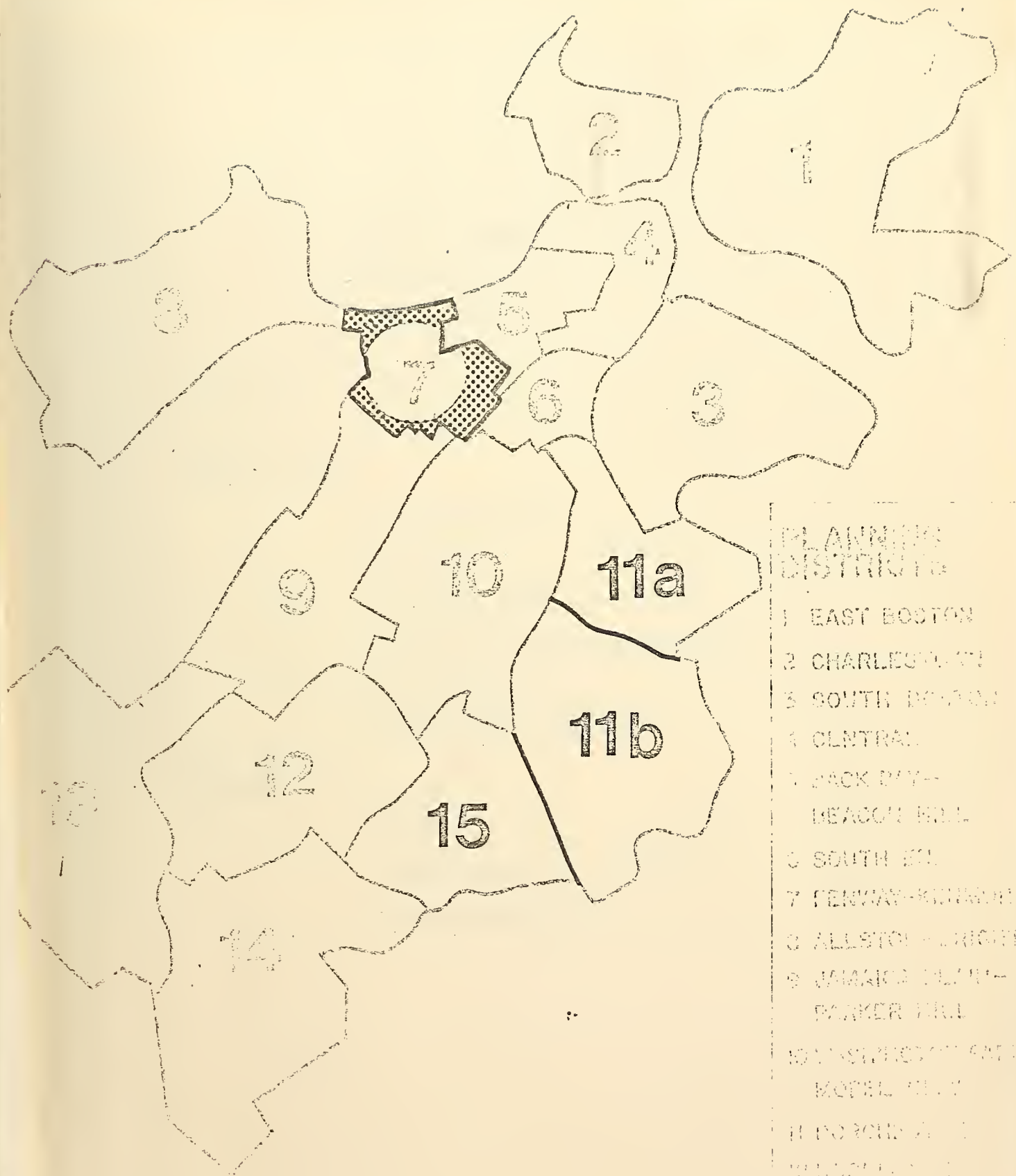
FENWAY-KENMORE District Planning Program



Fenway


B65 R.N





PLANNING DISTRICTS

- 1 EAST BOSTON
- 2 CHARLESTOWN
- 3 SOUTH BOSTON
- 4 CENTRAL
- 5 BACK BAY -
BEACON HILL
- 6 SOUTH END
- 7 FENWAY-KENMORE
- 8 ALLSTON - BRIGHTON
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FENWAY/KENMORE

Perspective

Frederick Law Olmsted's park and public works plan for solving the Muddy River's drainage problem was adopted by the City around 1880. The development of the Fenway and Kenmore Square areas proceeded rapidly and was completed by 1920. The Back Bay Fens divides the Fenway portion of the district from the Kenmore part. The former lies to the south and east of the Fens, while the latter lies to the north and west.

The Fenway became the locus for various institutions local and national importance: the Christian Science Church, Northeastern University, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Lahey Clinic, the Boston Symphony, Harvard Medical School and numerous other educational and medical institutions. Nearby--along Massachusetts and Huntington Avenues, overlooking the Fens, and on several interior streets--large apartment buildings and smaller townhouses were constructed and generally lived in by those affiliated with the institutions.

A renewal program was formulated by the BRA for the Fenway area of the district, following residential and commercial there and in concert with the expansion desires of the Christian Science Church and Northeastern University. Concentrating redevelopment activities along Massachusetts Avenue, the Fenway Urban Renewal Plan designated few resources to improvement of existing residential sections. More students and young adults moved into the Fenway area, joining an existing population with an unusually high concentration of elderly, persons with low incomes. The Fenway Renewal Project eventually erupted into a battleground for those disgruntled about the ability of the establishment to respond to their needs and opposed to making major changes in the physical and socio-economical characteristics of their area.

Meanwhile, during the Fenway's history of growth, deterioration and renewal, Kenmore Square evolved in a rather ambivalent fashion, with no significant public control or investment. As originally developed, Kenmore was an annex of the downtown. At one point there were several fine hotels in the Square, and both wealthy families and professional offices located in the Bay State Road, townhouses. The adjacent wholesale district served large firms such as S.S. Pierce and Sears. The Fens-Peterborough and Audubon residential areas developed with quality apartment buildings and brownstones.

The fibre of these structures and the tenor of the Kenmore area have changed greatly in recent years. Universities now occupy the hotels; professional offices and one-family brownstones and elegant larger apartment houses have been converted to residences for students (dorms, fraternities, lodging houses); some of the wholesale district has been taken over by institutions (Massachusetts College of Arts, Salvation Army). During the baseball season, Fenway Park traffic and uncontrolled Boylston Street, once an automobile dealer's row, is being redeveloped as a drive-in local retail district, without any coordination and foresight. A highway (Fens drive) and railroad now separated the neighborhood's concentrations of students (Bay State Road, Audubon Circle) and elderly (Petersborough Street area).

Issues and Needs

Population Shifts

In Fenway/Kenmore, the problem of population change relates to poverty, as well as to the need to stabilize and balance the mix of income and age groupings to help ensure a sense of continuity and community in the area.

The most dramatic change in population has been the loss of families and wealthier residents and the increase in young adults. Currently people between the ages of 15 and 25 (26%) and over 60 (20%) comprise almost half of the district's total population. Since 1960, the 15-to-24 group has doubled, while the proportion of all other age groups declined. Of the 3371 families in Fenway/Kenmore, 29% earn under \$5000 a year. A large proportion of the residents are single individuals; many reside in group quarters. The young adult population is projected to increase by 34%. The income of individuals is extremely low varying from \$2,140 to \$4,000.

A constant fear in the Fenway section of the district, particularly since the Hemenway Street riots, is that the poverty and crime of the South End will continue to spill over and further erode what was once a middle-income residential area. If the area is not stabilized, the pressure to increase the density in order to accommodate the youth population will spread to other areas of the city.

Housing

Most of the housing stock in Fenway/Kenmore is brick or stone multi-unit dwellings. Because of the half-century age of the structures, a lack of maintenance and critical demographic and wealth shifts, three basic needs are apparent in the district:

1. Residential. This could take place by allowing rents to rise, or by subsidizing rents and/or by revising the assessment practices so rents can remain relatively stable while the housing is brought up to code.
2. Capital Improvements. Significant rehabilitation of the area's parks, public utilities, etc. must accompany the investment in residential fix-up.
3. Enforcement of building, housing and zoning codes. This will insure that necessary private investment will be made and a viable supply of housing improved and preserved.

Commercial Areas

The change of population and ownership in the district is reflected in the transformed character of its commercial areas. Kenmore Square has emerged as a second-rate entertainment district and youth-oriented retail center. A comprehensive program of environmental improvements, regulation of alcoholic beverage and live entertainment licenses vastly stepped-up City services (especially sanitation and police), and possible selective redevelopment are needed.

A similar strategy on a smaller scale is required to upgrade and preserve the local neighborhood retail nodes on Kilbarnock and Jersey Streets, near Audubon Circle and at the northern end of Massachusetts Avenue near Beacon Street.

Wholesale District Redevelopment

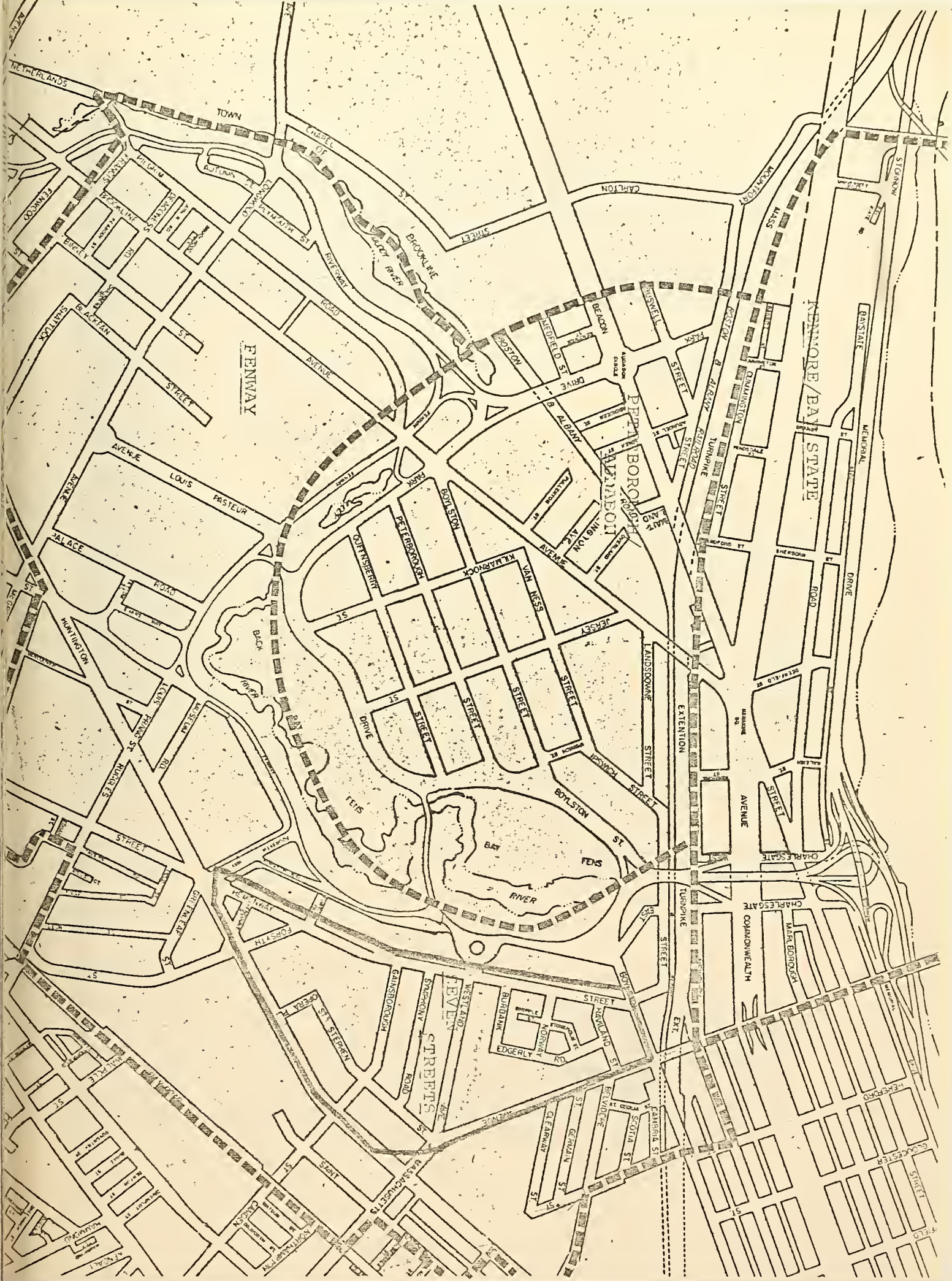
The wholesale and commercial area adjacent to Kenmore Square along Brookline Avenue and Boylston Street requires redevelopment and public policy controls to assure its proper re-use. The opportunity for a major and intensive development exists on Boylston Street, though the current trend is toward new single retail uses (Gino's, Star Market).

Major Arterials

Of the four major arterial roads in the Fenway/Kenmore District, two (Huntington and Massachusetts Avenues) will be upgraded by a Federal program. There are currently several proposals under study to improve circulation in Kenmore Square and along the Fens and Park Drive. These concepts should be further explored since the existing roadways are a major blighting influence.

Institutional Expansion

The uncontrolled and rapid expansion of Boston University and Northeastern University have had a severe negative impact on the district. Proper policy guidance and coordination with City investment strategy and planning goals could improve the current situation and encourage more orderly, efficient and attractive growth or consolidation of campuses and a minimization of undesirable effects of a student influx.



FENWAY

Population

The Fenway neighborhood is bordered by the Fens to the west and by the Christian Science Church and Northeastern University on its other perimeters. It includes the Seven Streets and Saint Botolph Streets areas and a small residential section of brownstones near the church. The Fenway population is extremely varied, with considerable transiency and with no particular ethnic or age group dominating. Only 10% of the 1970 population were living as families, and the income of those families was very low.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <u>Total 1970</u> | <u>Change '60-70</u> | <u>Black '60</u> | <u>Black '70</u> | <u>% Over 60</u> | <u>0-17</u> |
| 12,264 | +12% | 1060 | 1355 | 20% (247) | 17% (1986) |
| <u>Med. Inc.</u> | <u>% Families Under 5,000</u> | | | | |
| 4647-7348 | 29% (367/1264) | | | | |

Housing

The housing situation in the Fenway neighborhood is primarily multiple dwelling units in fair condition in a falling market. As a result of student and other youth tenancy and poor maintenance, without rehabilitation assistance and/or a revised assessment policy, this housing will continue to deteriorate. Currently ten investor owners own about 25% of the total stock, the majority of which are structures of four or more units. Owner-occupancy is concentrated in the one-to-four-unit buildings on St. Stephan Street, Symphony Road and the St. Botolph Street area. These are a potential asset if rehab assistance can be provided and blighting influences (illegal rooming houses, drugs and prostitution) eliminated. The Fenway Urban Renewal Project has identified approximately \$5-million for public improvements for the residential area, including water, sewer, sidewalk and street work for the Seven Streets. Northeastern University, the cause of various undesirable changes in the area, has been asked by the City to prepare proposals for parking, environmental improvements, neighborhood upgrading, fraternity house relocation and an overall development plan.

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <u>Total D.U.'s</u> | <u>Units Needing Over 1,000</u> | <u>Owner Occ. Units</u> | <u>% Units in 1-2 Families</u> |
| 5861 | 2418 | 2% (134) | 2% (130) |

Abandoned Structures

8

Commercial Areas and Arterials

The commercial strips along Massachusetts and Huntington Avenue may gradually improve with completion of the Fenway Urban Renewal Plan, increased residential stability and the renovation of the two arterials with Urban Systems funding. Because of land ownership, the redevelopment of these areas is in the hands of the Christian Science Church and the City; the commercial rejuvenation will only succeed if the needs and wishes of the present as well as future community are considered.

Community Groups

The Fenway community has several local organizations which are both active and effective. These include FenPAC, SAPBOA (Symphony Area Property and Business Owner's Association, St. Botolph Citizens Committee, Fenway Civic Association and others. The spirit of cooperation and the efficacy of these groups will depend in large part on the availability of resources and services to meet the needs.

Summary of Needs

Rehabilitation assistance (2418 units)

Revised assessment policies

Code Enforcement (housing, building, zoning, police) (5861 units)

Public Improvements

Completion of disposition parcels

Policy planning: City/Northeastern University

City services (police, sanitation)

KENMORE SQUARE/BAY STATE ROAD

Population

The Kenmore Square/Bay State Road sub-area is bounded by the Charles River to the north, Massachusetts Avenue to the east, the Mass Turnpike to the south and the Brookline border to the west. It includes the heart of the Kenmore Square commercial area. The neighborhood is populated chiefly by Boston University and Graham Jr. College students, who live in either apartments or group quarters.

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <u>Total 1970</u> | <u>Change '60-70</u> | <u>Black '60</u> | <u>Black '70</u> | <u>% Over 60</u> | <u>0-17</u> |
| 7463 | +16% | 98 | 235 | 2.5% (307) | 23% (17-22) |
| <u>Med. Fam. Inc.</u> | <u>% Families Under 5,000</u> | | | | |
| 9565 | 23% (62/266) | | | | |

Housing

The quality of construction is high along Bay State Road and of uniform character. These row-house brownstones are joined by large residences (formerly hotels or elegant apartment buildings) on the other streets towards Massachusetts Avenue. In and near Kenmore Square, the hotel-size residence dominates, with many serving as dormitories. The housing market has changed with the influx of students. While vacancies are not a problem, group quartering and inflated rents have worked to the detriment of residential stability in the area. Although zoning currently permits high-rise construction, property owners are adjusting to the changing market through conversions, and may illegal residential and retail uses have come into existence.

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <u>Total D.U.'s</u> | <u>Units Needing Over 1,000</u> | <u>% Owner Occ. Units</u> | <u>% Units in 1-2 Families</u> |
| 1509 | 253 | 4.6% (70) | 4.6% (70) |

Abandoned Structures

1

Commercial Areas

What was one a retail/office/hotel commercial area in Kenmore Square has become strictly a local, youth-oriented retail and entertainment district. Significant environmental problems exist demand a comprehensive program of physical upgrading, city services (police, sanitation), improved enforcement (building, zoning, sign codes), regulation of entertainment uses and possibly selected redevelopment. Another problem throughout part of the year is Fenway Park auto traffic and parking, which disrupts and congests Kenmore Square (See Audubon/Peterborough profile).

Community Groups

There are no active community groups in the area. Residents and merchants have attempted to organize but their own problems together with difficulties involved in obtaining resources to implement aspects of proposed plans have led to apathy. Boston University, has shown recent concern for upgrading the area. B.U. has prepared an environmental plan which includes Bay State Road; some needed improvements, such as tot lot and some mini-parks, would take place if the City would provide matching funds. Other needs could possibly be matched with merchant support.

Summary Needs

Capital improvements: parks, amenities

Building occupancy inspection program 1509 units

Commercial area environmental improvements (4 blocks 57 stores)

Improved city services

Boston University/City policy control and public improvement coordination

Organization of Kenmore Square merchants

PETERBOROUGH/AUDUBON

Population

Situated to the south of the Mass Turnpike and northwest of the Back Bay Fens, the Peterborough/Audubon neighborhood consists of two sub-areas, separated from each other by a large commercial/industrial strip, the highway and the railroad. The Peterborough section has a notably high concentration of elderly people who have lived in the neighborhood much of their lives; they have been joined by other relatively low-income residents, particularly young working people and students. In the Audubon portion similar demographics characterize the area, but the student population dominates because of proximity to Boston University. Throughout the Peterborough/Audubon area, there are few families, low incomes and virtually no home ownership.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <u>Total 1970</u> | <u>Change '60-70</u> | <u>Black '60</u> | <u>Black '70</u> | <u>% Over 60</u> | <u>0-17</u> |
| 7812 | +10% | 80 | 269 | 17% (1361) | 9% (723) |

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| <u>Med. Fam. Inc.</u> | <u>% Families Under 5,000</u> |
| 7283 | 28% (291/1030) |

Housing

As a consequence of a variety of factors--rent control, income of residents, the management and legal practices of Levron property owners, the age of the buildings--the housing market is askew. In the Peterborough section, for example, where Levron controls almost half the residential units, the current 25% vacancy rate is due not to a lack of demand but to tenants' strike and Levron manipulations to vacate whole streets of buildings to rehabilitate for higher rentals. Housing conditions throughout Peterborough/Audubon vary greatly, but almost one-third of the units require substantial repairs. Rehab assistance, housing inspection, code enforcement and City capital investment are needed to salvage this area, which could continue to serve as the home of retired persons and the growing segment of young working people.

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <u>Total D.U.'s</u> | <u>Units Needing Over 1,000</u> | <u>% Owner Occ. Units</u> | <u>% Units in 1-2 Families</u> |
| 4729 | 1391 | 1% (44) | 1.2% (56) |

Abandoned Structures
0

Commercial Areas and Arterials

The neighborhood shopping nodes near Audubon Circle and along Jersey and Kilmarnock Streets are currently suffering increasing vacancies; environmental improvements and some selective redevelopment are needed. Along Brookline Avenue, wholesale uses are being converted to institutional and retail sales outlets. There are some significant vacancies; including the former S.S. Pierce building. Some redevelopment and other special treatment are needed. Boylston Street might be helped by a current redevelopment plan which calls for an 11-story structure with ground-floor retail stores, resulting in a more coherent use of land and preventing the spread of one-story retail sprawl.

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

The impact of Fenway Park on the neighborhood is negative and severe. With every Red Sox home game, auto traffic clogs the streets, litter increases, and any available space is taken over for parking. Studies have been proposed for reducing the traffic flow on the Fens and Park Drive and thus on the smaller residential streets, and for providing Turnpike access to a Red Sox parking garage which would be constructed on Brookline Avenue. Both concepts could significantly reduce the problems.

Community Groups

In Audubon, there are no organized community groups. The Peterborough Street area has a well-organized and active tenants group and two or three other civic groups.

Summary of Needs

Rehabilitation assistance (1391 units)

Code inspection and enforcement (4729 units)

Red Sox parking facility

Review of assessment policy

Redevelopment of commercial/wholesale strip and upgrading of neighborhood shopping areas: Boylston Street (3 blocks),
Neighborhood areas (Queensbury, Kilbuck, Audubon).

Arterial improvements: Fens, Park Drive, Turnpike-Red Sox garage connector

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| | Fenway | Kemore | Peterborough/ Audubon | Fenway-Kenmore District |
|------------------------------|-----------------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Total 1970 pop. | 12,264 | 7,463 | 7,812 | 35,747 |
| % Pop. 1960-1970 | +12% | +16% | +10% | 0% |
| 1960 Black | 1,060 | 98 | 80 | 2,116 |
| 1970 Black | 1,355 | 235 | 269 | 2,132 |
| % Over 60 | 20% | 3% | 17% | 13% |
| % 1-17 | 17% | 23% | 9% | 17% |
| Med. Fam. Income | 4,647- 7,348 | 9,565 | 7,282 | 4,647- 9,565 |
| % Fam. Under \$5k | 29% | 23% | 28% | 29% |
| Total D.U.'s | 5,861 | 1,509 | 4,729 | 14,226 |
| Units needing \$1k fix-up | 2,418 | 253 | 1,391 | 4,310 |
| Owner-occ. Units % | 2% | 4.6% | 1% | 2% |
| % Units in 1-2 Fam. | 2% | 4.6% | 1% | 3% |
| Anadnoned Bldgs. | 8 | 1 | 0 | 11 |
| Mkt. Cond. | | | | |
| Comm. Area Land Mkt. | | | | |

